

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2532

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION NATO

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 2228

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJ: CDS ON ROSA COUTINHO

REFS: LISBON 2198; LISBON 2013; LISBON 1584; LISBON 3279

8/2/74

SUMMARY: CDS LEADERS DESCRIBE ROSA COUTINHO AS AMBITIOUS FOR THE PRIME MINISTERSHIP, NATIONALISTIC, PRAGMATIC, ANTI-COMMUNIST, AND POWERFUL. THE CDS GETS ALONG WELL WITH COUTINHO AND ARE TELLING THEIR EUROPEAN CONTACTS THAT THEY BELIEVE COUTINHO IS PRO-NATO AND PRO-EUROPE, UNLIKE THE PRIME MINISTER. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING THEIR TALKS WITH THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL REGARDING THE CONSTITUTIONAL PLATFORM OF UNDERSTANDING, CDS LEADERS HELD LONG DISCUSSIONS WITH ADMIRAL ROSA COUTINHO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL, AND ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL MEN IN PORTUGAL. ON OTHER OCCASIONS IN THE PAST THE PARTY LEADERS
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ALSO HELD DISCUSSIONS WITH COUTINHO. AS A RESULT OF THESE

CONTACTS, CDS DIRECTORATE HAS COME TO THE FOLLOWING CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE ADMIRAL AND HIS POLITICAL VIEWS.

2. THE CDS BELIEVES THAT THERE ARE THREE POWER CENTERS IN THE AFM, EACH LED BY A DIFFERENT PERSONALITY. ONE IS LED BY THE PRIME MINISTER, "A CRYPTO-COMMUNIST" WHO CONTROLS THE GOVERNMENTAL APPARATUS WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE PCP AND MDP, AND WHOSE FOREIGN ORIENTATION IS EASTERN EUROPEAN. ANOTHER IS LED BY FOREIGN MINISTER MELO ANTUNES: THE CDS SAYS THIS GROUP IS THIRD WORLD ORIENTED, ROMANTIC, AND UNREALISTIC. ANTUNES, AS FAR AS THEY ARE CONCERNED, IS A MARXIST INTELLECTUAL LACKING IN PERSONAL CHARISMA, SOMEWHAT INTROVERTED, AND TOO THEORETICALLY ORIENTED. THE THIRD GROUP IS LED BY ROSA COUTINHO. COUTINHO SUPPOSEDLY ENJOYS THE ALLEGIANCE OF MOST OF THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL, HIS MAIN POWER BASE.

3. THE CDS FEELS THAT COUTINHO IS EMERGING RAPIDLY AS THE MOST POWERFUL OF THE THREE MEN. THEY DESCRIBE HIM AS AMBITIOUS, THE BEST POLITICIAN OF THE THREE, PRAGMATIC, AND A NATURAL LEADER, WHOSE COMMANDING PRESENCE IS FELT IN ANY GROUP. HE IS FAST ON HIS FEET, SPEAKS WELL IN PUBLIC, AND IS ABLE TO KEEP HIS FOOT OUT OF HIS MOUTH. THEY ADMIT THAT HE IS HARD TO CATEGORIZE POLITICALLY-- "HE IS ABOVE ALL ROSA COUTINHO." HE IS SOCIALISTIC BUT A DEFINITE ANTI-COMMUNIST. HE SUPPOSEDLY HAS HIS OWN IDEAS ABOUT PORTUGAL'S FUTURE AND DOES NOT SUPPORT ADOPTING FOREIGN MODELS WHOLE CLOTH. HE IS ECLECTIC WHEN IT COMES TO IDEOLOGY, PICKING AND CHOOSING WHAT HE CONSIDERS TO BE THE BEST FEATURES OF VARIOUS SYSTEMS. THE CDS SEES HIM AS A NATIONALIST, AND POINTS OUT THAT UNLIKE THE OTHER TWO MEN, IN HIS PUBLIC STATEMENTS HE TALKS ABOUT DEVELOPING PORTUGUESE PRIDE AND NATIONAL HONOR. CDS VICE PRESIDENT ADELINO AMARO DA COSTA COMPARES HIM TO PERUVIAN PRESIDENT ALVARADO, I.E., A NATIONALISTIC, ANTI-COMMUNIST INTERESTED IN SOCIAL JUSTICE AND A NATIONAL BRAND OF SOCIALISM ADAPTED TO NATIONAL REALITIES.

4. IN TERMS OF FOREIGN POLICY, THE CDS FEELS THAT OF THE THREE MEN COUTINHO IS THE MOST REALISTIC ABOUT PORTUGAL'S NEED TO REMAIN CLOSE TO EUROPE AND THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE. HE IS NOT ENAMORED WITH THE THIRD WORLD MYTH.

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5. THE CDS DIRECTORATE RESPECTS COUTINHO, FEELS THAT IT CAN COMMUNICATE WITH HIM DESPITE THEIR PROFOUND IDEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES, AND THAT OF THE THREE HE IS THE BEST ONE TO SUPPORT. THEY ARE SAYING SYMPATHETIC THINGS ABOUT HIM TO THEIR EUROPEAN CONTACTS. THEY THINK THAT COUTINHO IN TURN RESPECTS PARTY LEADERS--HE HAS TOLD THEM SO PRIVATELY--FOR THEIR HONESTY AND COURAGE IN STANDING UP FOR THEIR CONVICTIONS DESPITE UNFAVORABLE POLITICAL CONDITIONS, AND FOR OFFERING THE AFM

CONSTRUCTIVE SUGGESTIONS WHEN ASKED. THE CDS BELIEVES THAT COUTINHO IS RESPONSIBLE IN GREAT MEASURE FOR THE FACT THAT THE PARTY CONTINUES TO REMAIN LEGAL. THEY SUSPECT THAT COUTINHO SEES IN THE CDS A COUNTERBALANCE TO THE PCP.

6. COUTINHO LED CDS LEADERS TO BELIEVE THAT HE DOES NOT THINK MUCH OF THE INTELLECTUAL PROWESS OF THE PRIME MINISTER, AND THAT HE IS NOT CLOSE TO MELO ANTUNES. ALTHOUGH THEY CANNOT PROVE IT, THE CDS THINKS THAT COUTINHO AND THE PRESIDENT GET ALONG WELL AND NEED EACH OTHER'S SUPPORT: THE PRESIDENT TO KEEP DOWN THE COMMUNISTS AND TO KEEP PORTUGAL EUROPE AND NATO DIRECTED, AND COUTINHO TO BECOME PRIME MINISTER.

7. COMMENT: IN CONVERSATION HE HAD WITH ME ON MARCH 20 ROSA COUTINHO INDICATED A HIGH REGARD FOR CDS LEADERSHIP, ALTHOUGH HE DOES NOT "SHARE THEIR POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY." WHILE THE CDS MAY BE INDULGING IN SOME WISHFUL THINKING, THEIR ANALYSIS OF POWER CENTERS WITHIN THE AFM IS CREDIBLE. THEIR ASSESSMENT OF COUTINHO'S PERSONALITY CORRESPONDS TO THE INITIAL IMPRESSION I HAD OF HIM, ALTHOUGH I WOULD WANT TO WAIT UNTIL I KNOW HIM A BIT BETTER BEFORE DRAWING ANY FIRM CONCLUSIONS.

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